

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0907

May 26, 2010

Admiral Thad W. Allen
Commandant
U.S. Coast Guard
Coast Guard Headquarters
2100 Second Street, SW Stop 7101
Washington, D.C. 20593

The Honorable Jane Lubchenco
Administrator
NOAA
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Admiral Allen and Dr. Lubchenco:

The ongoing oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and the inability of British Petroleum (BP) and the Unified Command to effectively and expediently shut off the leak at the source and contain the oil is threatening Florida's economy, the environment and ecosystems it depends on and the jobs of an untold number of Floridians. I have specific concerns regarding both the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) and the Coast Guard's role in the response effort to date. I would therefore ask that you answer the below questions and provide any requested documents as soon as possible.

1. According to an April 29, 2010 story in the Mobile Register, federal officials, including a former NOAA oil response coordinator, drafted a pre-approval plan in 1994 that prescribed a plan that would have allowed response teams to begin *in situ* oil burning as "soon as a major oil spill occurred, without an approval process." Please produce the 1994 pre-approval plan and any documents related to that plan.
2. Do you agree with the assessment of former NOAA oil spill response coordinator Ron Gouguet that "The whole reason the [pre-approval plan] was created was so we could pull the trigger right away instead of waiting ten days to get permission." Why or why not?
3. Please explain why it took more than 1 week for officials to conduct a test *in situ* burn of spilled oil.
4. Is it true that at the time of the Deepwater Horizon spill the federal government did not have a single fire boom available for deployment? If not, how many booms were available for deployment within 24 hours?
5. Is it true that in order to conduct a test burn more than 1 week after the spill began federal officials had to purchase fire boom from a supplier?
6. How long did it take for that fire boom to be delivered to the point of deployment?
7. Is it true that the 1994 response plan called for multiple fire booms to be available and deployed to deal with a spill of this magnitude?

8. Who is responsible (both agency and individual) for assuring that the necessary response materials are available for timely deployment?

9. Do you agree with Mr. Gouguet's estimate that 95% of the oil could have been captured through timely executed *in situ* burning? If not, what is your estimate and what is the basis for your estimate?

I look forward to your prompt and thorough response. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly should have any questions or require any clarifications.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "George S. LeMieux". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "George" being the most prominent part.

George S. LeMieux
United States Senator

GSL/fcw